



CONFLICT MITIGATION

U.S. Ambassador dedicates school annex

Ambassador Tina Kaidanow dedicated a new annex to the Dobrotin village primary school in Lipjan/Lipljan municipality. Students, school staff, and community members of the village attended the ceremony on the cold and snowy day of November 24th.

Dobrotin is a community of 1,500 residents, predominantly Kosovo Serbs. There is only one school building in the village, hosting approximately 130 students. Building additional classrooms was a priority for the community. USAID, in close partnership with the community, constructed the annex of three classrooms and a gym. A computer room was rehabilitated to support IT classes. In addition, a brand new heating system, including a boiler room and radiators, were installed.



Students of Dobrotin school greet Tina Kaidanow, U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo, at the USAID event

Ambassador Kaidanow was joined by Bojan Stanojevic, community member and Member of Parliament of Kosovo, Mr. Sasa Rasic, Minister for Community and Returns, and Mr. Slobodan Petrovic, President of Serb Liberal Party (SLS).

The initiative is a part of USAID's Community Enhancement Development Project, implemented in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Incentive Funds for municipalities that show performance improvements

Nine out of 22 projects submitted by municipalities will be supported under the first round of USAID's Incentive Fund grants. These grants are part of a \$1.4 million Incentive Fund designed to encourage and reward municipalities of Kosovo that strive to improve municipal

performance in areas of their new competencies. The Incentive Fund grants are implemented with cooperation between USAID's Effective Municipalities Initiative, the Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA) and the Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AKM).

The first round of the competitive Incentive Fund grants is intended to encourage municipalities to improve their performance in delivery of municipal services, or to implement new and innovative municipal management practices. Currently, USAID's Effective Municipalities Initiative is conducting regional trainings for municipalities on application procedures for the second round of Incentive Fund grants.

USAID aims to issue 19 grants in the second round, of which, eight will be to municipalities with the best projects to improve municipal service delivery, two for applying new and innovative management practices, four grants to municipalities that first demonstrate significant compliance with the new decentralization framework, and five awards to the municipalities that demonstrate the biggest increase in the collection of own source revenues from 2007 to 2008. The grant awards are reviewed by an evaluation committee consisting of USAID's advisors, MLGA and AKM representatives.

USAID's Effective Municipalities Initiative is a three year project designed to support Kosovo municipalities to better serve their residents as they gain new competencies to better serve all Kosovo residents. The Effective Municipalities Initiative is implemented by RTI International.

LEGISLATIVE STRENGTHENING

Constituency representation

Seventeen cases have already been logged in at the Pristina multi-party Constituency Office during the first two weeks after its opening on November 14th. The office in Pristina is currently used by five members of the parliament from different parties, and each has scheduled a working day to spend hours at the office meeting citizens in addressing various issues.

According to Ms. Burbuqe Jashari, office assistant, "many citizens came to the office since its opening. Seventeen cases were accepted and MPs are working on them. Cases are predominantly related to citizens' requests for social assistance, employment, medical treatment abroad, financial compensations after privatization, problems with tax administration, etc."

This office is the first of its kind in Pristina. Individual citizens and civil society organizations can now directly address their concerns and issues with their representatives who may raise these issues at the Assembly of Kosovo.

A similar office was opened in Gracanica on November 24th, and Slobodan Petrovic, leader of Serbian Liberal Party, participated at the opening ceremony.

Both offices are supported by USAID through the Political Party and Legislative Strengthening Project implemented by the National Democratic Institute (NDI). During the next six-months (Nov 2008 - May 2009) NDI will provide full funding for the office operations, equipment, materials and staff salaries in both constituency offices, in Pristina and in Gracanica.

EDUCATION

Partnership for better education

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed on December 5th 2008 between the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and USAID's implementing partner, CHF International, marks the beginning of a new partnership for better education in the country.



Enver Hoxhaj, Minister for Education, Science and Technology, and Ms. Patricia Rader, USAID/Kosovo Director, at the ceremony along with Isa Mustafa, Mayor of Pristina (far right)

CHF International is implementing the Small Infrastructure Program in Kosovo. The program is a two-year activity which began in September 2008. The program is designed to work in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and municipalities' Departments of Education to help improve and expand the space in existing schools and reduce the number of school shifts from three or four down to two per day and to create better learning conditions for students.

Under this program, USAID expects to implement at least 35 projects benefiting about 45,000 students. In addition, the program will build a pilot demonstration project that is an environmentally friendly "Green School," a concept new to Kosovo.

The program will start work initially with schools in the municipalities of Pristina, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Vushtrri/Vucitrn, Gllgovc/Gllgovac, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Ferizaj/Urosevac, and Prizren. The MOU was signed by Mr. Enver Hoxhaj, Minister for Education, Science and Technology, and Mr. Ian Schneider, Program Director, CHF International. Ms. Patricia Rader, USAID/Kosovo Director, signed the MOU as a witnessing party. The partnership is part of USAID's assistance to support Kosovo Government priorities for improving infrastructure for education throughout the country.

JUSTICE FOR ALL

Ensuring access to justice for all citizens

A Memorandum of Understanding signed on December 3rd between the Kosovo Chamber of Advocates (KCA) and the Legal Aid Commission ensures that legal services are available to eligible citizens of Kosovo.

The initiative brought together the Kosovo Chamber of Advocates (KCA) and Legal Aid Commission, the two most important organizations required by law to provide free-of-charge legal representation to vulnerable groups and under-represented communities of Kosovo, to ensure increased attention to access to justice for all citizens.

The Memorandum of Understanding establishes the framework for the development of uniform referral procedures to ensure that those who seek legal aid services are provided assistance from members of the Chamber of Advocates, as needed. The coordinated work of the Legal Aid Commission and the Kosovo Chamber of Advocates will ensure that the voices of citizens seeking access to justice will be heard regardless of their ethnicity, gender, or economic status. Hajredin Kuci, Deputy Prime Minister, and Patricia Rader, USAID/Kosovo Director, acknowledged the importance of the initiative along other speakers.

USAID has supported the improved coordination of the two institutions through a series of trainings and workshops under its Justice Support Program. In addition to the work of the Justice Support Program, USAID, through ABA ROLI, has been instrumental in promoting and supporting the development of the Kosovo Chamber of Advocates.

USAID's Kosovo Justice Support Program is a three-year program seeking to ensure that all Kosovo citizens are able to gain access to courts and have equal access to effective court services. The Kosovo Justice Support Program is implemented by the National Center for State Courts.

U.S. Agency for International Development

Arbëria (Dragodan), Ismail Qemali st., nr. 1

Phone: ++ 381 38 243 673

Fax: ++ 381 38 249 493

For more information visit www.usaid.gov/missions/kosovo and <http://pristina.usembassy.gov/> or contact us at kosovousaidinfo@usaid.gov